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A request for correction of the description has been filed pursuant to Rule 88 EPC. A decision on the request will be taken during the proceedings before the Examining Division (Guidelines for Examination in the EPO, A-V, 2.2).

The title of the invention has been amended (Guidelines for Examination in the EPO, A-III, 7.3).

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54 Process for reducing the crystal size of ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate.

57 The invention relates to a process for reducing the crystal size of ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate produced by crystallisation from solvent to a size which is suitable for effective distribution in a tablet blend, in particular 100% less than 250µm. The ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is desolvated by drying at elevated temperature and reduced or atmospheric pressure and is then rehydrated.

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PROCESS

This invention relates to a process for reducing the crystal size of ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate. More particularly the process involves desolvation and resolution.

Reduction of crystal size through solvation and desolvation has been described previously, for instance for the compound griseofulvin (K. Sekiguchi et al., Chem. Pharm. Bull., 1968, 16, 2495-2502). Various techniques may be employed to effect desolvation such as drying at an elevated temperature and under vacuum, drying at an elevated temperature and at atmospheric pressure, drying at ambient temperature under a high vacuum, freeze-drying, or drying over a desiccant. However, the precise conditions of desolvation considerably affect the efficiency of the reduction in crystal size.

Ondansetron, the approved name for 1,2,3,9-tetrahydro-9-methyl-3-[(2-methyl-1H-imidazol-1-yl)-methyl]-4H-carbazol-4-one, is a highly selective and potent antagonist of 5-hydroxytryptamine (5-HT) at 5-HT₃ receptors. Ondansetron, together with its physiologically acceptable salts and solvates, is described and claimed in British Patent No. 2153821B, and may be used in the treatment of a variety of conditions, including the nausea and vomiting induced by cancer chemotherapy and radiotherapy (as described, for example, in European Patent Specification No. 226266A).

The preferred form of ondansetron for pharmaceutical formulation is the hydrochloride dihydrate. Ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate may be presented in a variety of formulations, one of which is as tablets for oral administration, when particularly suitable unit doses of the drug substance for the treatment of emesis are 5mg and 10mg.

In the tablet manufacturing process, ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is blended with suitable excipients, and the blend is then compressed into tablets.

Since a low dose of drug substance per tablet is required, for example, 5mg of ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate in a tablet of 125mg compression weight, the distribution of the drug substance in the blend is critical in obtaining individual tablets with the correct drug content. Uniform drug distribution in the tablet blend may be achieved using drug substance of appropriate particle size. However, the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate obtained by methods described in the art, i.e. that obtained by simple crystallisation from an aqueous solvent mixture with subsequent drying at ambient temperature and pressure contains particles which are too large (i.e. >250µm) to give an homogeneous distribution of the drug substance in the tablet blend. Indeed if crystalline ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate produced by such conventional methods were used in tablet manufacture, the tablets so produced would not possess an acceptable drug content which, for a 5mg tablet, is 5mg ± 0.25mg of ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate.

Attempts to mill crystals of ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate to reduce their particle size have proved unsuccessful, for example, comminution milling of ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate caused screen blockage of coarse and fine screens. Furthermore, although ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate of particle size <250µm can be obtained by passing the substance through a 60 mesh sieve (as described, for example, in UK Patent No. 2153821B), this method is not commercially viable.

We have now found a process which reduces the crystal size of ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate produced by simple crystallisation from solvent (more particularly aqueous solvent mixtures) to a size which is suitable for effective distribution of the drug substance in the tablet blend.

Thus the invention provides a process for reducing the crystal size of ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate obtained by simple crystallisation from solvent, more particularly an aqueous solvent mixture, to a size which is suitable for effective distribution in a tablet blend, which comprises desolvating the said drug substance by drying at an elevated temperature and reduced or atmospheric pressure, and then rehydrating the ondansetron hydrochloride so formed.

It is possible by means of the process according to the invention to reduce the crystal size of ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate to the extent that the entire drug substance consists of particles of a sufficiently small size (i.e. less than 250µm, of which typically about 80% by weight are less than 63µm) to give an homogeneous distribution of the drug substance in the tablet blend.

Preferably, the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate obtained by crystallisation is desolvated by heating at a temperature greater than 40°C (e.g. 50°C) and at reduced pressure (e.g. 200 torr or less) for more than 8 hours. Alternatively, the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate obtained by crystallisation may be desolvated at ambient pressure by heating at a temperature of 50°C or above (more preferably 100°C).

Most preferably, ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate obtained by crystallisation is desolvated by heating at 50°C at a pressure of 100 torr for 2 hours.

The desolvation process may be carried out with or without mechanical agitation.

The resultant ondansetron hydrochloride of reduced crystal size is then rehydrated, for example, by

placing it in a humidified atmosphere of, for example, air or nitrogen, at ambient temperature. Rehydration will generally be continued until there is no further gain in weight.

According to another aspect, the invention provides crystalline ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate characterised in that 100% of the crystals have a size of less than 250 μ m and at least 80% by weight of the crystals have a crystal size of less than 63 μ m (as measured by air-jet sieve analysis).

According to a yet further aspect, the invention provides a pharmaceutical composition in the form of tablets containing crystalline ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate as active ingredient characterised in that 100% of the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate crystals have a size less than 250 μ m and at least 80% by weight of the crystals have a crystal size of less than 63 μ m (as measured by air-jet sieve analysis).

Generally the composition will contain at least one physiologically acceptable carrier or excipient.

The invention is illustrated by the following examples. Temperatures are in °C. Crystal size was measured by air-jet sieve analysis.

Example 1

1,2,3,9-Tetrahydro-9-methyl-3-[(2-methyl-1H-imidazol-1-yl)methyl]-4H-carbazol-4-one hydrochloride
dihydrate wherein the crystals are less than 250 μ m

A solution of 1,2,3, 9-tetrahydro-9-methyl-3-[(2-methyl-1H-imidazol-1-yl)methyl]-4 H -carbazol-4-one (147g) in a mixture of isopropanol (670ml), water (250ml) and glacial acetic acid (76ml) at ca. 60° was clarified by filtration and diluted with more water (61ml) and isopropanol (650ml). The solution was treated at 70° with 36%w/w hydrochloric acid (46ml) and cooled to ca. 5°. The resulting suspension was filtered and the filtered solid was washed by displacement with isopropanol (600ml) to give a solvent wet solid (269g). A portion of this solid (91g) was dried at ca. 50° and 200 torr for ca. 16h to give a solid (55g).

A portion of the dried solid (26g) was placed in a current of humidified air at ambient temperature until there was no further gain in weight and the title compound (29g) was obtained.

Particle Size Distribution of Title Compound	
Size (μ m)	Cumulative % Undersize (by weight)
45	43.4
63	83.7
90	97.6
125	98.4
180	99.6
250	100.0

Example 2

1,2,3,9-Tetrahydro-9-methyl-3-[(2-methyl-1H-imidazol-1-yl)methyl]-4H-carbazol-4-one hydrochloride
dihydrate wherein the crystals are less than 250 μ m

The previous preparation was repeated except that after collection by filtration the solid was dried at ambient temperature and pressure to give large crystals (>45% by weight of crystals larger than 250 μ m) of 1,2,3,9-tetrahydro-9-methyl-3-[(2-methyl-1 H -imidazol-1-yl)methyl]-4 H -carbazol-4-one hydrochloride dihydrate.

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Particle Size Distribution of "Larg Crystals"	
Size(μm)	Cumulative % Undersize (by weight)
45	5.8
63	9.8
90	20.8
125	26.7
180	37.8
250	50.6
355	71.5
500	90.9
710	98.4
1000	98.6

20 A sample of this solid (26.9g) was dried at ambient pressure and 100° for ca. 17h during which period the weight of the sample was reduced to 24.3g. The sample was then exposed to ambient temperatures and humidities until it had regained its original weight to afford the title compound.

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Particle Size Distribution of Title Compound	
Size (μm)	Cumulative % Undersize (by weight)
45	47.6
63	94.8
90	100.0

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Example 3

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1,2,3,9-Tetrahydro-9-methyl-3-[(2-methyl-1H-imidazol-1-yl)
dihydrate wherein the crystals are less than 250 μm]methyl]-4H-carbazol-4-one hydrochloride

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1,2,3,9-Tetrahydro-9-methyl-3-[(2-methyl-1 H -imidazol-1-yl)methyl]-4 H -carbazol-4-one hydrochloride
 dihydrate obtained by crystallisation from a solvent was dried at 52° and 100 torr for 24h and then
 rehydrated to give the title compound.

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Particle Size Distribution of Title Compound	
Size (μm)	Cumulative % Undersize (by weight)
45	44.3
63	83.2
90	97.0
125	98.8
180	99.8
250	100.0

Example 4

1,2,3,9-Tetrahydro-9-methyl-3-[(2-methyl-1H-imidazol-1-yl)methyl]-4H-carbazol-4-one hydrochloride
dihydrate wherein the crystals are less than 90 μm

1,2,3,9-Tetrahydro-9-methyl-3-[(2-methyl-1 H -imidazol-1-yl)methyl]-4 H -carbazol-4-one hydrochloride
dihydrate obtained by crystallisation from a solvent was dried at 48° and 100 torr for 24h and then
rehydrated to give the title compound.

Particle Size Distribution of Title Compound	
Size (μm)	Cumulative % Undersize
45	49.0
63	92.4
90	100.0

Claims

1. A process for reducing the crystal size of ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate produced by crystallisation from solvent, characterised in that the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is desolvated by drying at elevated temperature and reduced or atmospheric pressure and then rehydrated.
2. A process as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is prepared by crystallisation from an aqueous solvent mixture.
3. A process as claimed in claim 1 or 2, characterised in that the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is desolvated by heating at a temperature greater than 40° C and at reduced pressure for more than 8 hours.
4. A process as claimed in claim 3, characterised in that the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is desolvated by heating at a temperature of about 50° C at a pressure of about 100 torr for about 24 hours.
5. A process as claimed in claim 1 or 2, characterised in that the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is desolvated by heating at a temperature of 50° C or above at ambient pressure.
6. A process as claimed in claim 5, characterised in that the temperature is about 100° C.
7. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 6, characterised in that the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is rehydrated in a humidified atmosphere at ambient temperature.
8. Crystalline ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate characterised in that 100% of the crystals have a size of

less than 250 μ m and at least about 80% by weight of the crystals have a size of less than 63 μ m.

9. A pharmaceutical composition in the form of tablets containing crystalline ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate as active ingredient, characterised in that 100% of the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate crystals have a size less than 250 μ m and at least about 80% by weight of the crystals have a size less than 63 μ m.
10. A pharmaceutical composition as claimed in claim 9, characterised in that each tablet has a nominal content of active ingredient which is 5mg or 10mg.

Claims for the following Contracting States: ES,GR

1. A process for reducing the crystal size of ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate produced by crystallisation from solvent, characterised in that the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is desolvated by drying at elevated temperature and reduced or atmospheric pressure and then rehydrated.
2. A process as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is prepared by crystallisation from an aqueous solvent mixture.
3. A process as claimed in claim 1 or 2, characterised in that the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is desolvated by heating at a temperature greater than 40° C and at reduced pressure for more than 8 hours.
4. A process as claimed in claim 3, characterised in that the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is desolvated by heating at a temperature of about 50° C at a pressure of about 100 torr for about 24 hours.
5. A process as claimed in claim 1 or 2, characterised in that the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is desolvated by heating at a temperature of 50° C or above at ambient pressure.
6. A process as claimed in claim 5, characterised in that the temperature is about 100° C.
7. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 6, characterised in that the ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is rehydrated in a humidified atmosphere at ambient temperature.
8. A process for the manufacture of a pharmaceutical composition characterised in that crystalline ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate wherein 100% of the crystals have a size less than 250 μ m and at least about 80% by weight of the crystals have a size less than 63 μ m is processed to form tablets.
9. A process as claimed in claim 8, characterised in that the crystalline ondansetron hydrochloride dihydrate is processed to form tablets with a nominal content of active ingredient which is 5mg or 10mg.



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application number

EP 90307044.9

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl.)
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	
Y	CHEMICAL ABSTRACTS, vol. 110, no. 23, June 5, 1989, Columbus, Ohio, USA GLAXO GROUP LTD. "Imidazolyl-methylcarbazolone derivative as antidepressant" page 78, column 1, abstract-no. 205 704u & Jpn. Kokai Tokkyo Koho JP 63,165,314	1,9,10	C 07 D 403/06 B 01 D 9/00 A 61 K 31/415
Y	CHEMICAL ABSTRACTS, vol. 96, no. 8, February 22, 1982, Columbus, Ohio, USA SHIROTANI, KENICHI et al. "Studies of methods of particle size reduction of medicinal compounds. Part XIII. Studies on the ethanol, n-propanol and isopropanol solvates of cortisone acetate" page 358, column 1, abstract-no. 57 633v & Chem. Pharm. Bull. 1981, 29(10), 2983-92	1	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl.) C 07 D 403/00 B 01 D 9/00
Y	CHEMICAL ABSTRACTS, vol. 100, no. 18, April 30, 1984, Columbus, Ohio, USA PIKAL, M.J. et al. "Desolvation kinetics of cefamandole sodium methanolate: the effect of water vapor" page 355, column 2, abstract-no. 144 884x & Int. J. Pharm. 1983, 17 (2-3), 237-62	1	
A	EP - A2 - 0 275 668	1,9	
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search VIENNA		Date of completion of the search 17-09-1990	Examiner HAMMER
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS			
X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		I : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application number

-2-

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DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim
A	(GLAXO) * Claim 1 * -- <u>DE - A1 - 3 502 508</u> (GLAXO) * Abstract; example 10 * -----	1, 9
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims		
Place of search VIENNA		Date of completion of the search 17-09-1990
Examiner HAMMER		
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document		